

TRADING IN NOTIONS OF NATIVE: TOURIST ART AND AUTHENTICITY AT
CAMERON TRADING POST

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ABSTRACT

Kelsey Moen: Trading in Notions of Native: Tourist Art and Authenticity at Cameron Trading Post
(Under the direction of Carol Magee)

Cameron Trading Post, on the Navajo reservation in AZ, is a major tourist destination that draws thousands of visitors monthly. Comprised of a restaurant, Fine Art Gallery, gift shop, and hotel, Cameron sells viewers the chance to experience Southwest Native American culture by advertising an “authentic experience.” Through the lens of visual culture theories, this paper examines the role notions of authenticity play at Cameron, the specific objects being sold, especially the kachina and the narratives of authenticity that are used to sell them, and the economic-historical contexts surrounding the objects and their creators. Scholars working in the field of material culture have challenged the perception that tourist art is a benign, dismissible genre. Cameron’s tourist art provides a case study to consider the dynamic and impactful role tourist art can have in the political and social power dynamics of encounters with Native American culture.

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INTRODUCTION

Suddenly interrupting the sandstone hues of the Southwest desert, a large billboard with eight-foot-tall red letters urges travelers “DON’T MISS CAMERON TRADING POST” [Fig.1] On the side of AZ 64 in Arizona, this is the highway many visitors travel on their way to and from the Grand Canyon, before heading south and west back to the major travel hubs in Las Vegas and Phoenix. Visited by some 4.5 million people a year, Grand Canyon is one of the seven natural wonders of the world, attracting audiences from all over the world.¹ This billboard on 64 (and others like it, if one is on AZ 89 heading north toward Cameron) is the traveler’s first preparation for what to expect at Cameron Trading Post, either on their way to or from Grand Canyon. The words “GIFT SHOP-ART GALLERY-MOTEL” and a Shell Oil logo are the only indicators of what the offerings at the Post might be. The letters that make up “Cameron Trading Post” are in a font classified as Slab Serif, suggesting the ‘Wild West’, a bold and thick typeface typically associated with 19th-century Western saloons and wanted posters. It signals the theoretical space the traveler will enter at Cameron Trading Post, a place where Native (mainly Navajo and Hopi) culture is presented largely through the lens of 20th century narratives and conceptions.

In the online world, the introduction to Cameron is slightly subtler: the Google results tagline promises “we provide an authentic, historical experience, with Native American art,

¹“Park Statistics” <https://www.nps.gov/grca/learn/management/statistics.htm#visitation>

lodging, dining, and gifts.”² This short sentence is the business’s best chance to represent itself, to advertise what the owner thinks will most effectively draw people in. What is this ‘authentic experience’ and why do the proprietors of Cameron Trading Post believe people will want it? It seems one of the most important elements of this experience is “gifts/art” – since it is featured prominently on both the Highway 64 billboard and in the online tagline. ‘Gifts’ in this case refers to the Native American tourist art for sale at Cameron Trading Post, the focus of this paper. Scholars working in the field of material culture have challenged the perception that tourist art is a benign, dismissible genre. Using various visual culture theories, this paper aims to examine the vital role of the notion of authenticity at Cameron, the specific objects being sold as part of the narrative of authenticity, and the economic and historical contexts informing that narrative. Cameron’s tourist art plays a dynamic and impactful role in the political and social power dynamics of encounters with Southwest Native American culture.

Cameron’s owners are of EuroAmerican descent, yet 95% of Cameron’s employees are either Navajo or Hopi, and the art labelled “Native American made” is made by members of a Native American tribe, as mandated by law. Cameron the township, whose population is 95% Native American,³ revolves around the trading post, and the trading post relies on the Navajo Nation for its legal and civic needs. Such demographics highlight a complexity here – who is really manufacturing the ‘authentic experience’ for visitors to Cameron? How does one understand the Native peoples’ participation in the creation of narratives that can be read as false or as undermining goals of recognition and validity as a living culture? Or is it more complex

² Hereafter the title “Cameron” will refer to Cameron Trading Post, not the township of Cameron. When the township is discussed it will be noted as “Cameron the township.” Technically Cameron is not a township or city, rather a “census-designated place,” but the term township is employed for ease of use.

³ United States Census Bureau, 2000 Census.

than that, Native artists leveraging historically lucrative, if inaccurate, branding to sell their art successfully? To examine these questions, this paper draws on the work of scholars in the fields of postcolonial theory, art history, visual and material culture studies, including Ruth B. Phillips' discussion of Native art and the history of its relationship to the Western audience, Bruce Bernstein's examination of Native tourist art, and Margaret Jolly's work on authenticity and its role in the tourist experience.

To discuss tourist art, one must start with defining the tourist. It was a term first used in 1800, but it was not until the 1850s that the current understanding of the term was formed, negative connotations included.⁴ Bennetta Jules-Rosette, a scholar of tourist art, explains that tourists are "often viewed as ill-informed and gullible," assumed to be passive consumers who have no real aim besides their own pleasure.⁵ The objects collected by these consumers also carry negative associations; tourist arts have traditionally been viewed as mass-produced, inauthentic, kitschy knick-knacks, objects not worthy of the title 'art' and certainly not of serious art historical scholarship. This began to change with the 1976 publication of Dean MacCannell's *The Tourist: A New Theory of the Leisure Class*, in which the sociologist uses structuralist theory to seriously examine the construction of the tourist experience. That same year Arthur Graburn published *Ethnic and Tourist Arts: Cultural Expressions from the Fourth World* which focuses specifically on tourist art, arguing that these objects had much to say about both their producers and their consumers. Currently scholars such as Jules-Rosette continue the work of analyzing tourist art, which she defines as "objects valued ...because of their importance as markers and

⁴ Ruth B. Phillips, Christopher Steiner, "Art, Authenticity, and the Baggage of Cultural Encounters," in *Unpacking Culture: Art and Commodity in Colonial and Postcolonial Worlds* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 4.

⁵ Bennetta Jules-Rosette, *The Messages of Tourist Art : An African Semiotic System in Comparative Perspective* (New York: Plenum Press, 1984), 2.

mementos of the tourist's journey."⁶ Today we might add the element commercialization, one could consider a rock picked up on the side of the road a memento of a journey, but that rock could become "tourist art" if it was displayed for sale alongside other similar objects. This definition allows for an extraordinarily broad class of pieces representing countless cultures. The makers of these mementos and markers are part and parcel of the process, ranging from the singular, named artist, to commercial, assembly-line productions. These and every type between are present at Cameron.

If tourist arts are difficult to classify then in that sense they are comparable to Native American art in general, which Phillips notes often exists at the intersection of art, artifact, and commodity.⁷ Most of the objects sold at Cameron Trading Post shift between these categories, becoming doubly confounding as both tourist art and Native art and embodying the often contradictory, inconsistent modern discourses surrounding their distinctions. In particular, the kachina dolls for sale are a fascinating case study for the historically problematic and complex notions of authenticity at play at Cameron.⁸ The artistic form began as very tribal-specific, physical embodiment of spiritual practices. The pieces sold today have been transformed into objects only vaguely resembling their original forms, cleverly designed to appeal to and perhaps affirm a non-Native conception of Native spiritual practice. [Fig. 2] The Cameron kachina dolls do not do this affirming work alone, the spaces they inhabit, the narratives referenced, and histories celebrated around them are all part of a programmatic assemblage of imagery reinforcing non-Native perspectives on what it means to be Native American. The physical

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ruth B. Phillips, Christopher Steiner, "Art, Authenticity, and Baggage."3-19.

⁸ Throughout this paper the terms kachina dolls, kachina figurines, and kachinas are used interchangeably and refer to the kachina doll object, unless otherwise noted.

distance at Cameron between the fine art gallery and the main building (see Appendix A for a map of Cameron's layout), the historic Western paraphernalia hanging in the atrium of the main building, the Navajo woman weaving on a loom in a fenced-off space of the main building; when viewed by the visitor each of these sights play into a visual culture that relies on an authenticity created by placing Native culture firmly within a romanticized past, a vision authored by and for non-Native audiences.

Cameron's own history is one of the most celebrated and highlighted narratives authored in this space, appealing to nostalgic notions of the store as a key player in a Wild West drama. In 1911, a suspension bridge was built over the Little Colorado River near Cameron, Arizona, and for the first time the Grand Canyon was accessible from the southeast. Five years after the bridge was built, two brothers, Hubert and C.D. Richardson established Cameron Trading Post. For a time, the trading post was only visited by Navajo and Hopi people trading amongst themselves and for government supplies. The Cameron website states that the brothers "were trusted by local Native American people in matters concerning confusing new American legal & social systems."⁹ 'Confusing' is putting it mildly. Beginning with the Indian Removal Act of 1830, which forced many eastern tribes westward, the United States federal government began to legislate the culture of Native American peoples. In 1887 the Dawes Act (General Allotment Act) revoked tribal sovereignty, part of a forced assimilation project; not until 1924 were Native Americans granted full citizenship by Congress.¹⁰ In 1868 the Navajo Reservation was officially established through a treaty between the Navajo people and the US government, granting the

⁹ "History of Cameron Trading Post", Cameron Trading Post, 2017.
<https://www.camerontradingpost.com/history.html>

¹⁰ "Seven Time Periods of Federal Indian Policy" (Institute for Native Justice, n.d.),
http://www.instituteformativejustice.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/Seven_Time_Periods_of_Federal_Indian_Policy.pdf.

Navajo Nation sovereignty. When Cameron Trading Post opened in 1916 it outside the border of the reservation, however when the borders were expanded in 1934, Cameron was absorbed by the reservation. The Trading Post itself remained technically on the fee land the Richardson's had purchased, and the implications of this, along with more of the early history of Cameron and the reservation, will be further discussed in Chapter 3.

As the mid-century approached Cameron began to see more and more tourists as travel-based businesses capitalized on the emerging middle-class by advertising the West as a tourist destination, accessible first by train and later by automobile. Today Cameron serves hundreds of thousands of tourists every year, most of them on their way to or from Grand Canyon.¹¹ For the vast majority of these visitors, this will be their main exposure to the Navajo Nation, the only time they will spend on a Native reservation, and even though there is a Native presence at Grand Canyon, Native culture is not central in the way it appears at Cameron. People have historically been willing to pay for a novel experience, the main tenet of tourism, and the Native cultures of the Southwest remain a marketable experience. The marketing of both the Southwest and Native people has changed little at Cameron since it was first employed to draw in railway customers in the 1920s. One notices this particularly upon encountering popular 20th century narratives in the atrium of Cameron's main building, such as the 'Vanishing Indian' narrative in the Edward Curtis postcard display, portraying Native people as a disappearing element of the American landscape whose existence needed to be documented before it was gone forever; or the 'Noble Savage' narrative connotated by the headdress hanging on a mannequin display-head on the wall [Fig. 3], iconic symbol of "Nativeness" thought to be worn by all chiefs and warriors when it's actual use was limited to only a few specific tribes, not including any Southwest tribes.

¹¹ Carolyn O'Bagy Davis, *Cameron Trading Post*, Images of America (Charleston: Arcadia Publishing, 2016), 7.

These narratives have been capturing the imagination of EuroAmerican audiences since the age of Manifest Destiny and some consider them to have a deeply troubling history, at times employed as propaganda to support the US government's genocide of Native populations in the 1800s.

These narratives are based notions of authenticity. This paper will start by examining in-depth the ideas of authenticity at Cameron, the construction of this authenticity, its historical origins and its current role. The second chapter will examine a specific tourist art genre for sale at Cameron, the Hopi kachina doll, and will explore the tourist/fine art binary at play in Cameron's various spaces, what that means for the perceived authenticity of these objects. The final chapter will look at the economics of Cameron, and what role Cameron plays in the economy of both the Navajo reservation and the larger Southwest Native art market. Nearly every object and practice at Cameron is informed by its perceived authenticity, and so this paper begins with analyzing this phenomenon to better inform the discussions that will follow.

CHAPTER ONE: THE AUTHENTIC EXPERIENCE AT CAMERON

Central to the commercial success of Cameron is its perceived authenticity. Authenticity at Cameron works to both validate the narratives presented and assure the consumer that the objects for sale represent some ‘real’ and consumable truth about their makers. Whether or not the tourist is concerned with having a meaningful experience with Native culture (and many may not be), the visual context surrounding the experience of the purchase of one of Cameron’s objects is one that assures the visitor that they are in fact, having a meaningful exchange with another culture. This aura of authenticity is created in the objects and re-enforced by the experience surrounding the objects’ consumption. To understand the role authenticity plays at Cameron, it is important to first understand the history of the tourist experience in the Southwest. Cameron Trading Post was not a unique phenomenon, at one time there were over one hundred trading posts operating in the Four Corners region.¹² While many of these functioned as simple mercantile enterprises, places for travelers to re-supply, some were far more ambitious in their scope. Perhaps the most historically significant of these were the businesses created by the Fred Harvey Company. The influence of this company on the history of the region and the tourist market cannot be overstated. Novelist Frank Waters once said: “perhaps more than any single

¹² Johnny D. Boggs, “On the Trading Post Trail: From Ganado, Arizona to Tohatchi, New Mexico,” *True West*, March 20, 2010. <https://truwestmagazine.com/on-the-trading-post-trail/>

organization, the Fred Harvey system introduced America to Americans;”¹³ an America, one might argue; manufactured for the express purpose of attracting tourist dollars.

A savvy businessman, Fred Harvey had the entrepreneurial foresight to create America’s first chain of restaurants and hotels, all of which were connected to the rapidly growing railroad system. By the turn of the century the Fred Harvey Company and the Santa Fe Railway had formed a partnership that included sixteen hotels and restaurants along the line to California. The Harvey family began catering in the early 20th century to the emerging middle-class by touting the Southwest as an “exotic” tourist destination. Central to this marketing campaign were images of Native peoples.¹⁴ [Fig. 4,5] One of the more popular destination packages offered was called “Indian Detours,” offered first as part of railway travel packages, and beginning in 1926 as automobile tours in the Harvey Cars. In Figure 4, the route of the tour is marked upon a color rendering of a panoramic Southwestern landscape, foregrounded by a group of Native figures. Many of the figures appear in ceremonial garb. Of note is the seated figure on the right wearing a full war-bonnet headdress, a style originally only used by Plains tribes (none of which would appear in the geographic area of tour), but adopted by some members of Southwest tribes specifically to appeal to the tourist trade.¹⁵ To the right of this figure are Natives who appear to be engaging in Hopi ceremonial dances, events often commercialized against the wishes of the

¹³ Kathleen Howard, and Diana F. Pardue, *Inventing the Southwest : The Fred Harvey Company and Native American Art* (Flagstaff, AZ: Northland Pub., 1996), 1.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 9

¹⁵ Carolyn O’Bagy Davis, *Cameron Trading Post*, 79. Davis relates the story of Hosteen Noondái (often called “Old Chief”), a Cameron resident in the 30s and 40s, who most days would put on a warbonnet he had purchased and sit near intersection between Highway 89 and the road to Grand Canyon. Tourist would stop and pay one dollar to take a picture with him. One day while waiting for tourists he crawled under the newly constructed bridge to take a nap. The next tourists who came along thought he was dead and called the authorities. The bridge became known as Dead Indian Bridge, a name that persists today.

tribe.¹⁶ In Figure 5 a 1925 poster advertising the Grand Canyon railway line train called "The Chief," the warbonnet makes another appearance, the man's distinctive features, sharp cheekbones and aquiline nose, along with the bronze color of his skin and proud carriage, all combine to present a by then familiar image of the "Noble Savage," a narrative character portrayed as proud and worthy of admiration while remaining exotic. The text exclaims "the Chief is still the Chief," substituting the railway line for the exemplar of a vanishing race, offering an experience that would presumably prolong his existence in the modern era, safely taking you places where you can see other "real" Natives. In this campaign, one sees all tropes of Nativeness working at once, in the same way they would and continue to at Cameron. The 'Harvey Houses' (the name given to the hotels/dining establishments) in the 1920s in Albuquerque and at Grand Canyon were filled with Native American objects and imagery, continuing to build these narratives. Each of these narratives reinforced the tourists feeling and expectation of authenticity, presenting them with a reassuring and familiar visual program.

One of the main forces behind the Southwest Harvey House operation was Herman Schweizer (the man considered "Harvey's anthropologist"), who wrote in a letter to the U.S. Indian Service (under the Department of the Interior, later becoming the Bureau of Indian Affairs) that "the Santa Fe Railway, when this place was built, considered it [the Harvey House] first of all as an advertisement of the Southwest Indians ...the commercial part was only considered incidental."¹⁷ He believed this enterprise to be a net gain not only for the company but for the Native peoples as well, noting that before the Harvey Houses no formally established

¹⁶ Ceremonies could be performed by individuals away from the pueblos without permission of the tribes, or sometimes even in the pueblos themselves where monetary concerns outweighed cultural objections.

¹⁷ Howard, and Pardue, *Inventing the Southwest*. 14-15.

economy for Native arts, such as pottery and blankets, existed. When discussing the layout of the hotels he says “the major part of the Indian Building here was arranged in the form of exhibits, cozy corners, etc. to illustrate to people how these things can be utilized to best advantage.”¹⁸ “Utilized” here meaning placed into the modern home as décor, an appeal that extended to and even expanded in the post-WWI market. The connection between Native American items as home décor and narratives of primitivism will be discussed in the next chapter. For now, suffice to say that tourists were being presented with an experience at the Harvey House that used an aura of authenticity to give validity to the objects for sale.

Art historian Christopher Steiner parses the work of authenticity in tourist art by grounding it in Benjamin’s “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction.” Steiner notes that for Benjamin if a work is to be authentic it must be produced as a response to the demands of tradition, as close to “ritual, the location of its original use value” as possible.¹⁹ This of course becomes an issue when multiples of an object are mass-produced. Benjamin’s other focus is on the perception of these works, which Steiner argues might be better called the consumption of the objects. Steiner describes the way tourist objects are often presented, in rows and rows of nearly identical forms (as one finds with Cameron’s Navajo kachinas) [Fig. 2], is not in fact an error of the part of the seller, but rather a technique to prove that there is no ambiguity in the canonical validity of these pieces; these are obviously not “unique” as they “fit the mold,” reiterating traditional forms. Steiner is discussing African tourist art and believes that “tourists come to Africa with a perspective and a story in mind” and therefore seek images that “evoke

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Steiner, Christopher B., “Authenticity, Repetition, and the Aesthetics of Seriality: The Work of Tourist Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction,” in *Unpacking Culture: Art and Commodity in Colonial and Postcolonial Worlds*, ed. Phillips, Ruth B. and Steiner, Christopher B., (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1999), 87.

recognition and an easy sense of familiarity.”²⁰ Tourists at Cameron are likewise presented with a visual program of the Southwest and Nativeness that appears to be unchanged since the 20th century.²¹

One such example of 20th century narrative at Cameron can be found in some of the postcards for sale in the atrium area of the store. [Fig. 6 & 7] One rack of postcards features an entire series of Edward Curtis’ portraits. The text on the back of the postcards calls the photographer Edward Curtis a documenter of “the fading ways of the native North American.” Curtis’ work is still perhaps the most recognizable portrayal of Native people. His images played a foundational role in constructing the vanishing Indian narrative. He was not above posing Native individuals in ways that exoticized them further by removing clothes they were wearing or adding elements like warbonnets. While some of his portraits appear free of such manipulation, (including some on the rack at Cameron), it is generally accepted today that he was an artist more often concerned with his notions of what Native culture should be rather than faithfully documenting what he was encountering. None of the problematic constructive context about Curtis’ work is found in or around the postcards indeed, right above the postcard stand there is a bust with a feathered warbonnet for sale. [Fig. 8] Here are the objects tourists have been expecting, familiar, because they appear to exist as they always have, reinforced through the postcards on sale right next to them.

The “Vanishing Indian” however, never in fact vanished. Curtis’ portraits capture a nostalgia for a past that the visual culture at Cameron seems to suggest is still accessible, still

²⁰ Ibid, 99.

²¹ The second part of Steiner’s argument, that this prescribed format for tourist art also limits innovation, will be discussed in the next chapter.

present. This need to identify some essentialized and uniform past culture that represents a simple past, untouched by things like social progress and economic development (these introduced by contact with western European values, industry, and culture), a pure and de-historicized narrative (and thus still accessible), what scholar Margaret Jolly refers to as “a true tradition” is the subject of her scholarly work. In it she calls attention to the anxiety surrounding the validity of tourist art, an anxiety generated through a desire for authenticity, noting there is “a persistent specter of inauthenticity” haunting Western perspectives on tourist art (in her case, Pacific Islander art, but applicable to Native arts of any type), stemming from a position where unless Native art is a result of “true tradition,” it is not authentic and therefore suspect. Jolly describes the dangers inherent in this focus on a singular authenticity, problematizing it by noting it posits cultures as homogenous, unified and essentialized; and it denies Native peoples a history before the West brought change and progress.²² She notes that even if scholarship has moved past essentializing and de-historicizing these people and their works (at which one could argue, Cameron has made some attempt, see chapter two), holding on to authenticity via “true tradition” does not allow for discussion about the construction of the past, nor colonizing and decolonizing relations. If scholars could let go of the preoccupation with “whether tradition is genuine or spurious” it would shift focus to the relational and historical situatedness of Native peoples and Western society.²³ At Cameron, as in many Curtis portraits, Nativeness is staged, presented as genuine with the underlying condition that “genuine” is in fact attainable. Essential to this notion of authenticity at Cameron is the belief that there is only one “true” authenticity,

²² Margaret Jolly, “Specters of Inauthenticity,” in *Voyaging Through the Contemporary Pacific*, ed. David Hanlon and Geoffrey M. White (Lanham: Rowan & Littlefield Publishers, 2000), 274.

²³ Ibid, 275.

with no space for the complex and relational narratives argues Jolly argues. Cameron's constant attempts to banish the ever-present specter of inauthenticity obscure the complex power dynamics at play in this space, the economic forces at work, and the relevance of the Native people in contemporary society at large.

Some of the complexity inherent in these types of tourist experiences is discussed by anthropologists Katie Johnson and Tamara Underiner during their visit to "Tillicum Village" a tourist experience on Blake Island, Puget Sound where, like Cameron, visitors are promised an 'authentic experience.' Like Cameron, Tillicum Village employs Native peoples, members of the tribes whose cultures are being represented there. Johnson and Underiner investigate whether the experience is of one culture sharing with another (as advertised), or "a form of cultural commodification, appropriation, and consumption,"²⁴ or perhaps a combination of both. At Tillicum Village visitors attend a dinner-theater with a traditional salmon dinner and performances by Native peoples. One of the largest draws at Cameron is the restaurant, located in the rear of the main building with beautiful views of the Little Colorado river snaking behind the property. While Cameron serves a hybridized menu, a "pleasant mingling of American, Mexican, and local cuisine," the restaurant page of the website chooses to highlight the "Navajo taco," described as an "adventurous culinary experience."²⁵ Again, the word "experience," this taco is an event. While there are no obvious theater elements at the Cameron restaurant, the website spends almost two full paragraphs describing the setting of the dining room, assuring

²⁴ Katie N. Johnson and Tamara Underiner, "Command Performances: Staging Native Americans at Tillicum Village," in *Selling the Indian: Commercializing and Appropriating American Indian Cultures*, ed. Carter Jones Meyer and Diana Royer (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2001), 45.

²⁵ "Native American Restaurant and Dining", Cameron Trading Post, 2017.
<https://www.camerontradingpost.com/restaurant.html>

visitors that it is filled with Native art and artifacts. The menu itself features Navajo words and names for dishes. Johnson and Underiner discuss the notion of authenticity as an illusion meant to cater to “Western fascination with otherness”²⁶ and whether the salmon dinner fits that description. The Navajo Taco, while surrounded by a mix of other cuisines, is the one highlighted at Cameron because it is one of the only menu items that is distinctly Native (and specifically Navajo). Certainly, both the salmon dinner and the Navajo taco are commodified events, but what complicates both is the direct participation of the respective tribes in the production of these events/commodities.

Another seeming example of implication through participation through participation is described by Johnson and Underiner when they note that while on the way to the dinner event, the tour group passes “employees engaged in crafts such as woodcarving and beadwork.”²⁷ Although not staging an entire village, Cameron visitors can “visit our rug room and witness the art of rug weaving in action with rug weaver Elsie Gander as she weaves Navajo rugs.” Gander, like the workers at Tillicum, is performing her craft for a tourist audience.²⁸ [Fig. 9] To Johnson and Underiner the displays at Tillicum call to mind the troubling history of ethnographic displays, exhibitional and living-history in its aspect. They also note that the Tillicum employees work on a raised platform, clearly separated from the passing tourist. They feel this serves to “reify the distance, and thus the power imbalance, between observers and observed.”²⁹ At

²⁶ Katie N. Johnson and Tamara Underiner, “Command Performances: Staging Native Americans at Tillicum Village.” 51.

²⁷ Ibid, 48.

²⁸ “Welcome to Cameron Trading Post”, Cameron Trading Post, 2017. <https://www.camerontradingpost.com/>

²⁹ Katie N. Johnson and Tamara Underiner, “Command Performances: Staging Native Americans at Tillicum Village.” 48.

Cameron, Gander does her work in an area separated by a low fence, [Fig. 10] seemingly inviting observation rather than exchange. When you enter her space, a sign demands that one ask before taking a photograph [Fig. 11]. Native employees creating in front of visitors has historically been a part of the Southwest tourist market; Schwiezer explicitly implemented it as part of the original Harvey house. It was also part of the seminal 1941 Museum of Modern Art exhibit “Indian Art of the United States.” This show, curated by Rene D’Harnoncourt was meant to introduce “good Indian work, done without the interference of the whites” as fine art, suitable for refined tastes and modern sensibilities.³⁰ Unlike art typically displayed at MoMA, this exhibit featured Native artists creating the art in-situ, weaving on looms and even creating sandpaintings for audiences. It established once again the importance of perceived authenticity to the existence (and resultant consumption) of Native art, and with the same phenomenon occurring as recently as 1989,³¹ it cannot be dismissed as a strictly historical problem. Perhaps Gander’s positioning at Cameron today might not appear immediately problematic, but it refers back to an exhibitionary impulse and tradition of performative authenticity that historically has been seen as damaging.

In Tillicum, Johnson and Underiner note that there is no mention or indication of the establishment’s white owners. At Cameron, on the “History” page of the website the founding brothers are mentioned, however at the site itself, their role and the role of the current owner (Joe Atkinson, grand-nephew of the Richardson brothers), is never discussed. Even the “famous

³⁰ Frederic H. Douglas and Rene d’Harnoncourt, *Indian Art of the United States* (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1941), 199.

³¹ Johanne Lamoureux, “From Form to Platform: The Politics of Representation and the Representation of Politics,” *Art Journal* 64, no. 1 (March 2005): 64–73. In this paper Lamoureux discusses the international exhibit *Magiciens de la Terra*, which featured both Native and Aboriginal artists, meant as a response to the much criticized 1984 MoMA exhibit “Primitivism” in 20th Century Art.

Navajo taco” so highlighted at the Cameron restaurant, comes from a fry bread recipe that was developed from military rations given to the Navajo people during the Long Walk of 1864, the Navajo version of the Trail of Tears, when they were forcibly marched to northern New Mexico by the US government. Fry bread has become an integral part of Navajo culture but while its painful origin is respected and remembered within the indigenous community, this context is seemingly neglected at Cameron. Noted Navajo author Sherman Alexie believes “frybread is the story of our survival.”³² None of that complicated history is hinted at the paragraph Cameron devotes to the star menu item, privileging an uncomplicated, romanticized past over reality, a reality that could instead celebrate the innovation and determination of the Navajo people. Given the active presence of Native peoples at Tillicum, the sale of the art and food, and performance of their culture, Johnson and Underiner end their trip by reflecting that Native peoples should be considered co-producers of the cultural experiences that take place there. These ‘authentic’ portrayals of their customs certainly make both Cameron and Tillicum commercial successes (although Cameron’s role is more complex due to its context as a trading post and not a village), but at what cost to the cultures themselves? The noble savage, the vanishing Indian, these are all narratives that deny Native peoples a voice and a presence as living, contemporary people worthy of being heard. For example, Elsie Gander (the weaver) is performing her craft in the same physical and visual space as these narratives, seemingly working against her existence as a relevant, celebrated contemporary artist. The narratives surrounding her allow tourists to interpret her in line with those narrative, nothing encouraging them to view her as exception to the “frozen in time” 20th century narratives and the tip jar adds to the sense that she is an experience (and thus product) for the tourist to consume. The

³² Jen Miller, “Frybread,” *Smithsonian Magazine*, July 2008.

authenticity created by and around the cultural objects for sale at Cameron and centered on Native populations in the region is similarly problematic; these objects and their authenticity are the focus of the next chapter.

CHAPTER TWO: THE KACHINAS OF CAMERON

Walking from the parking lot into the main building at Cameron one is immediately overwhelmed by the sheer number of objects, colorful and bright, crowded into every available space. Dream catchers, rattlesnake eggs, potted cacti, woven baskets, and turquoise jewelry share space with convenience store items, and brightly dyed yarn. The stands and displays are arranged without any immediately discernable order and it is easy to get lost in the bewildering layout. It is not only objects that crowd the space, people of every nationality wander about, standing in one spot one is able to hear no less than 5 languages spoken in the span of a couple minutes by people examining the wooden dreamcatchers. It is everything one expects of a tourist market. Yet only a hundred feet from the sprawling main building, its entrance partially hidden from the big parking lot, is a small ivy-covered building “Fine Art Gallery.” The Gallery structure is built with sandstone and malapai rock, in an architectural style strongly reminiscent of the buildings seen at Grand Canyon. This space is quiet, only a few visitors talking in hushed tones in the two white-walled rooms. Here are a similar genre of objects as those present in the main building, but now they have been designated “art.” Cameron uses many subtle staging techniques to make the binary between fine art and tourist art clear; for example, much of the jewelry in the main building is displayed in typical glass cases, the pieces resting on velvet surfaces, but in the Gallery the jewelry cases have actual sand in place of velvet and the pieces are draped across driftwood and stones. (Fig. 12 & 13). This emphasizes the romanticized connections between the jewelry-makers and the land, these are true pieces of the Southwest. The other objects in the

Gallery are often lit, on pedestals, recalling those in typical gallery spaces. There is an upstairs area cordoned off with a velvet rope and a sign declaring the space open only to the “discriminating buyer.” (Fig. 14). This is an important phrase. It delineates one type of tourist from another, presumably based on the amount of money they are willing to spend.

The Fine Art gallery is catering to a different class of tourist from those in the main building, one who is willing to spend more money and who expects higher value, quality objects in exchange. However, these gallery visitors are not typically connoisseurs of Native Art; that crowd generally goes to the Santa Fe Market or more prestigious art shows to collect highly-regarded pieces.³³ This has implications for how authenticity is constructed, and therefore, consumed. The gallery space does not have potted live cacti and rattlesnake eggs like the main space, but it has many of the same genre of objects. The baskets, pottery, rugs, and kachinas in the Fine Art gallery appear to observe a much stricter notion of authenticity, according to Steiner’s discussion of tourist art. This close adherence to traditional formats is a method Steiner argues is used to justify the higher price points. In the main building at Cameron, there is a reliance on at least some suspension of disbelief on the part of the tourist; the objects labelled “handmade” and “authentic” are placed alongside items with clear “made in China” stickers. These objects work together in a recognition that this is a tourist space and with the implications that the Native made objects are authentic to the local regions and that the Chinese made objects are not authentically Native. This creates a hierarchy of economic and spiritual value for objects.³⁴

³³ The Santa Fe Indian Market and its audience will be discussed in greater depth in the next chapter.

³⁴ It does not deny that objects made in China are authentically Chinese, simply that at Cameron, *that* authenticity is not being deployed in the marketing of Nativeness.

In both the Gallery and in the maze of aisles and displays of the main building there is one particularly colorful form that crops up over and over: the kachina doll. One of the most recognizable and iconic genres of Southwest Native art, the kachina doll has captivated the Western audience for over a century. The history of the Kachina is a complex one, and one that highlights the painful origins shared by many tourist arts. The kachina dolls at Cameron are made by both Hopi and Navajo artists, a situation that relies on especially convoluted constructions of authenticity. Kachinas are marketed and sold as both high-end fine art objects worth thousands of dollars in the gallery, and as kitschy souvenirs worth much less in main building. The line between the two categories is presented at Cameron as clear and defined, staged in two entirely different spaces. At first glance the spaces appear to follow defined notions of what a gallery should be versus a gift shop, but small instances such as the ‘cozy corner’ in the gallery work to destabilize these constructions. Ultimately the presence of the kachina dolls in both spaces rely on two different but equally complex perceptions of authenticity.

The history of the Hopi and Pueblo people of the Southwest and their spiritual practices is a particularly tragic one. The Hopi people believe the world is inhabited with hundreds of nature spirits, known as *katsinas*, whose forms and associations vary from pueblo to pueblo.³⁵ The *kiva* is a building in the heart of the village, featuring a half-submerged altar known as a *sipapu*, representing the exchange/entry point between the spirit world and the village. Major religious ceremonies involve annual dances where dancers wear masks representing specific katsina. In addition to the masks, small figurines of the katisinas are carved from cottonwood and used to teach children about the various spirits, with the belief that each kachina holds a piece of

³⁵ Throughout this paper katsina will be used to refer to the religious deity, and kachina (the Westernized spelling) will be used to refer to the physical objects.

the katsina whose form it takes. This practice continued until the late 1500s when the Spanish, led by Francisco Vázquez de Coronado, established a hold over the Pueblos. The Spanish quickly set about destroying kivas and katsina figures, replacing them with Catholic crosses and churches. The Pueblos united and revolted in 1680, but their freedom was short-lived, and Spanish rule continued into the 19th century.³⁶ By the time the Pueblos and Hopi people became part of the United States, they were long accustomed to using secrecy to protect their religion and keep cultural information, practices, and objects to themselves.

Today, most Pueblos do not permit photography of their katsina dances and do not believe that their religious practices and objects are ‘art’ for consumption by outsiders. How then are there figures labelled “authentic kachina dolls” for sale at Cameron? Western fascination with kachinas and Hopi ceremonies began as soon as they were exposed to them. Early anthropologist were eager collectors. Leigh Kuwanwisiwma, from the Hopi Cultural Preservation Office, tells the story of a drought in the early 20th century that hit Hopi pueblo hard. “Collector Henry Voth from the Field Museum arrived with seven wagons of commodities, and he left with seven wagons of artifacts—an altar was traded for four sacks of flour.”³⁷ This story is typical and resulted in sacred items filling the collections of many museums (the Field did not even want all the kachinas Voth brought back, and presumably sold the extra into private hands). The Hopi people are currently fighting for the return of historic kachinas under cultural

³⁶ Janet C. Berlo and Ruth B. Phillips, *Native North American Art*, 1st ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998) 48-52.

³⁷ Frances Madeson, “NAGPRA fails to stop loss of sacred objects in Paris”, *Indian Country News*, April 27, 2016 .URL: <https://indiancountrymedianetwork.com/history/genealogy/nagpra-fails-to-stop-loss-of-sacred-objects-in-paris/>

patrimony laws.³⁸ Anthropologists also recorded sacred ceremonies, often without the consent of the tribe, and that information is also still circulating. In their anthology *Native North American Art* Janet Berlo and Ruth Phillips make a point of not including any photographic images of Kachina masks or ceremonies, a mark of respect seemingly undercut in the larger popular world of information, since the Wikipedia entry for “Kachina Doll” contains several such photographs of masks and ceremonies. In any case, by the turn of the 20th century the Kachina figure had entered the public consciousness as a sacred item worth collecting, and the Hopi people responded by created kachina dolls specifically for the tourist and fine art markets, trade in kachina dolls has continued unabated. It remains one of the most iconic and popular forms of Southwest tourist art, evidenced by its prevalence at Cameron.

Kachinas at Cameron range in price from under twenty dollars to thousands of dollars. Like many items on the tourist market these Kachinas are altered significantly from their sacred, original form and hybridized to appeal to a broad market. However, at Cameron one also encounters “Hopi Kachina Dolls” made by Navajo artists. Cameron attempts to explain this strange occurrence on the website in a section titled “History of the Kachina Doll.” The convoluted phrasing in the paragraph describes how kachina dolls have evolved from simple cottonwood carvings used didactically into elaborate carvings featuring wool, feathers, and other items. The author of the page makes a distinction between what they call “Native American Kachina dolls” and “Hopi dolls,” the former defined as carvings that contain elements other than wood (feathers, etc.), possibly done by non-Hopi artists and the latter as strictly done by Hopi artists. They make the argument that “Kachina dolls” done by Navajo artists are as valuable as

³⁸“Hopi Indian sacred objects sold in Paris auction despite protests”, Reuters, URL: <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-france-auction/hopi-indian-sacred-objects-sold-in-paris-auction-despite-protests-idUSBRE9B80QJ20131209>

“Hopi dolls” but end the paragraph by stating that only a hand-carved, cottonwood Hopi doll “can be called a true Kachina.” All this appears to be Cameron’s attempt at attaching the cultural cachet of the historic kachina doll to these new forms and giving the Navajo-made figures the same authenticity as the historic Hopi form.

Some of the least expensive kachinas are presented in the main building as an overwhelming display of hundreds of little figures in rows upon rows. The sign in the middle of the display [Fig. 2] declares these are “Navajo Handmade Dolls: Replica of the Hopi Kachina Doll.” The middle doll in [Fig. 15] is a typical example. It rests one foot on a juniper disk, serving as the base. One leg is raised as if the doll is mid-dance. This “action figure” style began to appear in the fine art and tourist markets in the late 20th century.³⁹ The head and neck feature downy white and brown feathers. There are two pieces of red and green yarn tied around the figure’s waist. His skirt is painted with a geometric pattern in reds and white. The body is one rectangular piece of wood, with the arms, legs and head attached separately. At first glance his regalia and mask seem entirely unique but studying the dolls as a group reveals each artist uses common patterns with slight variations per doll. This center doll is very similar to the doll on the far left. The piece seems to be constructed using standardized forms which are then hand-painted based on templates of color and design. Still one feels that each doll is a separate character in its own right, which is largely the appeal of the genre as a whole. It is also still following the recognizable format of a kachina doll which is ultimately important for the tourist who is purchasing it. This allows the buyer to feel as if they are bringing a piece of Hopi spiritual practice into their own home, a playful little deity to keep watch on the mantle. Although these particular figurines are not explicitly connected to specific katsina deities, they are suggestive of

³⁹ Berlo and Phillips, *Native North American Art*, 55.

the figurines who do have distinct spiritual meanings. Or perhaps the kachina figure is simply a colorful reminder of time spent in the Southwest. In this case, even though their label identifies them as “Kachina dolls” in an attempt to establish their authenticity, so too does their formal adherence to a template. The geometric designs on the figurines’ skirts and the colors used signal more generalized Native motifs rather than any specific kachina figure. This level of generic authenticity is acceptable in these objects because they are not exorbitantly priced and the replication within the group reaffirms their authenticity, in the same way Steiner’s rows of African masks are validated in their repetition. The figurines’ Navajo origins, as opposed to Hopi, are shifted to the background, no longer threatening the validity of the figures.

The most expensive kachina doll for sale currently on the Cameron website is titled “Hemis Kachina” by Hopi artist Adrian Nasafotie, listed for \$7,900. The 18” tall figure is entirely carved from cottonwood root. [Fig. 16 & 17] The Hemis kachina is a well-known figure and Nasafotie has incorporated the traditional large headdress, putting his own twist on the stair-step form featuring feathers and phallic symbols.⁴⁰ The figure carries a bunch of cattails in his left hand while his right holds a basket of fruit and vegetables (Hemis is a kachina of good harvest), while various other elements such as the woven belt and animal tail are also expected but executed in bright, brilliant colors. As a piece that would be displayed in the Fine Art gallery rather than the main building, the individuality of Nasafotie’s carving would be highlighted in the gallery, through its elevation on a podium, lit and placed as a singular object. The differences between the two expressions of the same form, Nasafotie’s kachina and the 4” Navajo kachinas;

⁴⁰ Jonathan S. Day, *Traditional Hopi Kachinas: A New Generation of Carvers* (Flagstaff: Northland Publishing, 2000). Much of the information about the art of kachina carving is pulled from this source, another valuable source for those looking for more context about the religion behind the kachina is Polly Schaafsma, *Kachinas in the Pueblo World* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1994), which includes essays by both Anglo and Native scholars. For more information on kachina collecting, Barton Wright, *Hopi Kachinas: The Complete Guide to Collecting Kachina Dolls*, revised edition (Flagstaff: Northland Publishing, 2000).

the specific Hopi elements versus more generic Native motifs, the quality of the materials and work, the attention to detail and craftsmanship are clear. Both objects are navigating a complex notion of authenticity which must encompass both types of kachinas without discrediting either. Steiner might consider Nasafotie's piece to be the flip side of the earlier method of authentication by repetition. Although talking about African art, he argues that the tourist market does not allow for what Benjamin would call avant-garde work because the "canons of authenticity" as set by outsiders are such that the styles and forms of the past take precedence over developments that may arise in the present or future."⁴¹ Nasafotie is a well-regarded Hopi artist, one of his pieces taking Best in Show at the Santa Fe Indian Market in 2016. The piece [Fig. 18] that won shows a certain playfulness, the traditional Hemis forming the center, but with another kachina soaring above, supported by impossibly thin ribbons, and even smaller human figures at the base. His piece at Cameron in contrast, is still beautiful but follows more closely the traditional form. Certainly, the same could be said of the Native American tourist art market, where forms such as basketry, pottery, weavings, and representational painting are favored over more contemporary forms. Native artists working in postcolonial, postmodern modes, such as Greg Deal, Wendy Red Star, and Nicholas Galanin produce works that challenge and play with traditional forms, but these original works would seem to complicate the narrative of authenticity presented by the visual culture of the Cameron Fine Art Gallery, because they do not "imitate an agreed-upon style."⁴² Benjamin claims that systems of mass production (which Steiner is reading as systems of tourist art) create their own standards of authenticity, Benjamin's "exemplars of

⁴¹ Christopher B., Steiner. "Authenticity, Repetition, and the Aesthetics of Seriality: The Work of Tourist Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," 102.

⁴² Ibid.

reality.” This reality becomes a limited, bounded one, with no space for perceived outliers, such as Nasafotie’s less traditional pieces.

As another example of the bounded space in the Fine Art Gallery at Cameron there is a strange little scene in the corner of one of the rooms, an alcove of sorts under the stairs leading to the second floor [Fig. 19]. It features a small iron wood-burning stove, a rug and woven mat hanging on the wall, a miniature loom with a two-foot tall doll in the act of weaving, hanging above her is a portrait. It may appear as simply a quirky little display, but it emulates a historic home décor method, called the “cozy corner.” This phenomenon of “cozy corners,” more specifically “Indian corners” (cozy corners encompassed several non-European cultures) is analyzed by scholar Mary Hutchinson, who argues that the Indian corner in particular was meant to ameliorate “the increasing alienation brought on by industrialized work, urban life, and international trade.”⁴³ Interestingly, Hutchinson points out that typically the objects in these corners were themselves a result of modernity, mass-produced in assembly line environments and shipped internationally. In the early 1900s major department stores such as Wanamakers and Macys in New York created elaborate displays as part of what Bennett calls the “exhibitionary complex,” the 19th century impulse to collect, organize and then display knowledge.⁴⁴ With Native American objects this evolved into the phenomenon of the “Indian corner”, a small space in the EuroAmerican home filled with Native objects, typically an animal skin or rug on the ground, basketry or pottery on a shelf, and a portrait (painting or photograph) of a “real” Native person, all arranged in the manner of an inhabitable natural history diorama. As the 20th century

⁴³ Elizabeth Hutchinson, *The Indian Craze: Primitivism, Modernism, and Transculturation in American Art, 1890-1915* (NC: Duke University Press, 2009), 19.

⁴⁴ Ibid, 36.

progressed into the 40s and 50s, the Indian Corner thrived while other similar formats (such as the Oriental cozy corner, fell out of fashion. Hutchinson argues that as Native objects and people were increasingly romanticized as spiritual beings uniquely connected to some elemental America, they provided the antidote to overly- sterile and reductive modernist design.

The cozy corner was part of the design at some of the original southwest Harvey Houses. Herman Schweizer, mentioned earlier in this paper, was selling Native-made objects as home décor. Schweizer stated “the major part of the Indian Building here was arranged in the form of exhibits, cozy corners, etc. to illustrate to people how these things can be utilized to best advantage.”⁴⁵ The inclusion of this cozy corner in the Fine Art Gallery, where the aim appears to be framing these objects as fine art to be displayed, illustrates the adherence of Cameron’s visual culture to 20th century narratives.

Ultimately both spaces in Cameron, the Gallery and the main building, present a consistent visual narrative. It appears to offer visitors the opportunity to experience and consume authentic Native culture. Yet in the midst of celebrating stories and art of the past, there is no room left for narratives of the present. Certainly, many of the current truths of contemporary Native Americans are uncomfortable and complex, and most tourists are not going to enjoy an experience that leaves them feeling uneasy about their purchases. However, the damage done by presenting these static, romanticized narratives is not insignificant, as noted by Gregg Deal in his piece “The Last American Indian On Earth”,⁴⁶ and one has to imagine that the complexities can be explored in both a sensitive and positive way, educating while also entertaining the tourist.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ A performance piece where “an unsuspecting public is confronted with the flesh-and-blood version of a stereotype, one that for most is the only authentic expression of what it means to be an Indigenous person of the American continent,” Gregg Deal, 2014. <http://greggdeal.com/The-Last-American-Indian-On-Earth>

Perhaps allowing for more of the Native voice would allow the tourist to feel an even greater connection to the local community, assuming they do not want any of this context does the tourist a disservice. The implications of the current narratives are explored in the next chapter.

CHAPTER THREE: THE HISTORY AND ECONOMICS OF CAMERON

Previous chapters discussed the visual culture tourists are presented with at Cameron. From the first glimpse of the billboard to the war bonnets on the wall to browsing at the Fine Art Gallery, a tourist is surrounded by narratives that are little changed since the 20th century. This paper has examined the visual programs at Cameron that reinforce these narratives, but this chapter expands the analysis to look at the ways these visual programs of authenticity can potentially obscure harmful economic truths. The origins of Cameron, its apparent relationship with the Navajo reservation, and its role in constructing a particular type of authenticity regarding Native culture, a constrained and limited authenticity.

The very first Navajo trading post was established in 1896 by George Richardson (father of Cameron founders C.D. and Hubert) at Bosque Redondo, in eastern New Mexico. Bosque Redondo, also known at the time as Fort Sumner, was where the Navajo people had been forced to relocate to after “The Long Walk” from Arizona. Like the more well-known “Trail of Tears,” the Long Walk was a forced march of some 300 miles, a relocation of the Navajo people by the US government in 1864. However, two years later the Navajo became one of the only few tribes allowed to return to their homeland. Trading posts began to appear across Arizona and northern New Mexico, as “a lifeline of supplies for Navajos looking to re-establish themselves after the

Long Walk of 1896.”⁴⁷ This was Cameron’s original function, providing dry goods to Navajo who came to barter and trade with livestock and weavings. So-called “Indian Traders” were licensed by the Bureau of Indian Affairs, and in the Southwest a network of trading posts was quickly established. These posts were run almost exclusively by white men (occasionally by their wives for short periods), and the traders became the middlemen between the government and the tribes. Despite often being well-intentioned, the traders created an economy wherein the Native peoples relied on them as financial intermediaries and by extension these traders became cultural brokers as well. Ultimately this left little room for the tribes to establish their own successful commerce, a situation that in part has contributed to the poor economic state of the Navajo reservation today.

President Bill Clinton once famously compared the Oglala Lakota reservation in South Dakota (the nation’s second largest reservation behind the Navajo) he visited to third world countries.⁴⁸ The facts seem back Clinton up. In 2010, the midst of the Great Recession in the United States, unemployment in Detroit, Rhode Island, and Oregon reached nearly 11 percent and these worrying numbers made national news.⁴⁹ However, according to the US Department of Treasury in 2001 - on average the unemployment rate across US reservations was 50 percent, with some reservations as high as 80 percent.⁵⁰ While those worrying statistics do not make national news, it should come as no surprise that these numbers are accompanied with the

⁴⁷ “Trading Posts”, Navajo Tourism Department, accessed 6.7.2018: <http://www.discovernavajo.com/trading-posts.aspx>

⁴⁸ Robert Miller, *Reservation Capitalism: Economic Development in Indian Country* (Santa Barbara: Praeger, 2012), 3.

⁴⁹ Ibid, 2.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

highest infant death rates, malnutrition rates, and lowest levels of formal education in the nation. In 2000 1.4 percent of US households did not have access to electricity - on reservations that number jumps to 14.2 percent.⁵¹ All of this indicates the economics of reservations, and the lifestyles they support, are not ideal.

Technically, Cameron is not on Navajo land, it is built on fee land, land surrounded by the reservation but not owned by the tribe. When the land was sold by the government to the Richardsons in 1916 it was on the western border of the reservation, but a 1934 westward expansion of the reservation led to the land's status as fee land. This fact became important in 2000 when the Navajo Nation passed a law raising the tax on hotel occupancy. Cameron (as parent company Atkinson Trading Co.) sued, arguing that they were not required to pay the new tax based on their fee land status. The case was argued in front of the Supreme Court. Chief Justice William Rehnquist and the rest of the court voted unanimously that "Navajo Nation's imposition of a hotel occupancy tax upon nonmembers on non-Indian fee land within its reservation is invalid."⁵² In an earlier Supreme Court case, *Montana v. United States*, the court ruled "Indian tribes lack civil authority over the conduct of nonmembers on non-Indian land within a reservation"⁵³ however, there were two exceptions established in this earlier ruling:

(1) a tribe may regulate the activities of nonmembers who enter consensual relationships with the tribe or its members; and (2) a tribe may exercise civil authority over the conduct of non-Indians on fee lands within its reservation when that conduct threatens or has some direct effect on the tribe's political integrity, economic security, or health or welfare.

⁵¹ Ibid, 3.

⁵² *Atkinson Trading Co. v. Shirley*, 523 U.S. 645 (2001).

⁵³ *Atkinson Trading Co. v. Shirley*, 523 at 650 U.S.

The Navajo argued that the hotel tax fell under both these exemptions. Cameron is reliant on the tribe for their emergency services, police force, and fire protection. The hotel, restaurant, and shops employ over 100 tribal members, constituting 80 percent of their workforce. The Richarsons' (now Atkinson's) retention of their Indian Trader license was viewed by the Navajo as a "consensual relationship." The Supreme Court's decision implies that the commerce of Cameron has no major impact on the economy of the reservation, indicating no major portion of Cameron's profit goes to the Navajo people. This profit is presumably a healthy one (tour groups are often booked up to two years in advance) and Cameron's decision to sue over the tax indicates a disinclination to share any of the monetary gain with the people whose culture they are commodifying for that gain.⁵⁴

The economic situation on the reservations is the result of many historical factors, but there is cause for hope. Economist Robert J. Miller describes the economic challenges on reservations as not entirely dissimilar from past challenges faced by other rural areas. He believes one of the keys to creating functioning economies within reservations is to encourage entrepreneurship, to focus on creating more small businesses on tribal lands. Native Americans "own private businesses at the lowest rate per capita of any ethnic or racial group in the United States."⁵⁵ Cameron employs mainly Native workers, and there are no images of either the Richardson brothers or the current owners featured, so one could not be blamed for assuming that the trading post is Native-owned and operated. This allows tourists to assume that their experience is the product of decisions by the Navajo tribe rather than the Atkinson Trading Company.

⁵⁴ Davis, Carolyn O'Bagy, *Cameron Trading Post*.

⁵⁵ Miller, *Reservation Capitalism*, 7.

Camron celebrates its history, particularly recently with their centennial in 2016, but it is a carefully crafted history, only showing one side of the story. In the atrium of the main building many objects from the trading post's past are displayed: rusted tools, equestrian tack, wooden signage, etc., alongside kitschy items from a romanticized past such as feathered headdresses, one a particularly bright shade of neon orange. [Fig. 3] The fonts on the signage, the use of terms like "parlor" "rooming house" [Fig. 20] keep the visitor firmly in the ideological realm of the "Old West", a type of romanticized Hollywood cowboys and Indians 20th century visual culture. There are no mentions of the Long Walk, the reason for Cameron's establishment, and also no sign of the contemporary Native story or relevance. Immersed in an experience mediated and situated by this atmosphere, it allows tourists feel comfortable spending their money on the objects here; they have been inserted into a world where their experience (and thus consumption) of Native culture is not only authentic, but also unproblematic. For example, in a TripAdvisor review titled "Authentic Indian Souvenirs" Jerome M. from Gary, Indiana says he spent over one hundred and fifty dollars and felt happy about it because Cameron was "a great place to experience Native American culture."⁵⁶ Participating in a highly idealized interaction, they might walk away feeling as if their time and money were spent truly understanding the Navajo (and other Native) people. There is no need for any further investigation, they have had their authentic experience; "Travelingrhonda", from Tennessee, feels as if Cameron "captures the Native American way of life."⁵⁷ Many of the reviews acknowledge that this place is a "tourist

⁵⁶ Jerome M. on "Cameron Trading Post" Trip Advisor, January 29, 2018.
https://www.tripadvisor.com/ShowUserReviews-g31180-d2442560-r557003627-Cameron_Trading_Post-Cameron_Arizona.html

⁵⁷ Travelingrhonda on "Cameron Trading Post" Trip Advisor, June 30, 2016.
https://www.tripadvisor.com/ShowUserReviews-g31180-d2442560-r387985702-Cameron_Trading_Post-Cameron_Arizona.html

trap”, but for most that does not necessarily make it a negative experience. Many reviews note that there are made-in-China objects but encourage others to “look for the real stuff.”⁵⁸ Overall Cameron has many positive reviews and a four (out of five) star rating.

The visual culture of Cameron seems to be positioning two different audiences in its spaces, assuming some are simply wanting a small token or gift to take home, and others are those willing to spend serious money on an art piece to display. Both audiences are presumably arriving with similar preconceived notions about Native art and culture, both in the US and internationally, Native peoples are often presented in essentializing and historicizing terms. As discussed previously, the visual culture of Cameron does nothing to dispel or challenge these misleading notions, rather it reinforces them.

In contrast to the situation at Cameron is the Santa Fe Indian Market. Held every August since 1922, it is the largest gathering of Native artists and collectors, items classified as both fine art and tourist art are sold side-by-side in a festival that takes over nearly the entirety of Santa Fe, New Mexico. In his history of the event, art historian Bruce Bernstein chronicles the beginnings of the Market, a result of one man’s (Edgar L. Hewett, then director of the Museum of New Mexico) desire to promote tourism in the Southwest. As in Cameron, the railway was bringing in throngs of tourists, eager to experience the real Southwest. Hewett himself conceived of a “Santa Fe” style of pottery for the artists at the nearby pueblos to produce (white EuroAmericans creating designs for Native artists to produce was not uncommon), and the Market became a way to promote this pottery. As the Market grew through the decades, changes came quickly. In the 1970s the show, (run by the Southwestern Association for Indian Arts, SWAIA) became juried,

⁵⁸ Chris L on “Cameron Trading Post” TripAdvisor, July 2018.
https://www.tripadvisor.com/ShowUserReviews31180-d2442560-r592282091-Cameron_Trading_Post-Cameron_Arizona.html

and around the same time dealers, traders, and non-Native artists were no longer allowed to sell their wares. In 1975 and 76, iconic Native painter Fritz Scholder attempted to create a judging category for non-traditional painting. His efforts were rejected, but in 1980 the categories were opened. In 1984, a pottery piece by Jody Folwell and Bob Haozous, titled “Cowboys and Indians”, depicting innovative social commentary in a traditional form, won Best in Show.⁵⁹ With that, the floodgates were opened and today artists such as Jason Garcia, who depicts comic-book inspired characters in his pottery, exhibit alongside another artist’s abstract-impressionist paintings. Bernstein notes the Market’s attempts to foster creativity, not stifle innovation, allowing visitors to experience what he calls “an honest, viable, up-to-the-minute report on who Indian people are today,” claiming the Market as a whole as “the nation’s largest and most important Native arts event.”⁶⁰ This description of an experience where buyer and seller interact and experience authenticity in personal and meaningful ways, might conceivably be implemented on a smaller scale at Cameron.

Certainly, the artists at Cameron are not completely removed from the authorship, identity and thus authenticity are displayed there. Anthropologist Trudy Nicks examines the Poking Fire Village, a tourist attraction occupying a similar cultural space as Cameron, located in Quebec. She argues that while the operation was started by a white man, John McComber, as an “enterprise to provide visitors with a highly staged representation of Indians as exotic otherness”, the case is not so clear-cut.⁶¹ The village catered to “tourist expectations of Indianess,” and like

⁵⁹ Bruce Bernstein, *Santa Fe Indian Market : A History of Native Arts and the Marketplace* (Santa Fe: Museum of New Mexico Press, 2012), 131.

⁶⁰ Ibid, 7, 134.

⁶¹ Trudy Nicks, “Indian Villages and Entertainments: Setting the Stage for Tourist Souvenir Sales,” in *Unpacking Culture: Art and Commodity in Colonial and Postcolonial Worlds*, ed. Ruth B. Phillips and Christopher B. Steiner (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 301.

Cameron, mixed-and-matched elements from many different cultures, creating an environment where tourist art would sell well. The Mohawk tribe that the village belonged to were active participants in shaping the display, using the staging to ask for higher prices for their craftwork. They hybridized ceremonies and dances for viewers, reserving their actual spiritual practices for performing in private. Nicks notes that the production networks established by the tribe (to fulfill the high demand for trinkets similar to Cameron's Navajo kachina dolls) provided a type of community social security. Nicks sees the entire enterprise as a careful negotiation of representing Indianness that "appears to have satisfied the needs and goals of both participants in the encounter."⁶² Like Jolly, she argues that the question should not be one of "authentic or not" but rather an analysis of how different Native cultures choose to engage with constructed authenticities. She mentions several instances of Native peoples choosing to confront these stereotypes rather than use them as Poking Fire Village does.⁶³ How Native cultures choose to participate at sites such as Poking Fire, Tillicum, and Cameron often depends on the history of how they developed and the interactions that occurred between the EuroAmericans that were involved in their establishment.

The result of a time when the US government was determined to either physically exterminate or culturally assimilate the Navajo people, Cameron functioned as a middleman, its only clear motivation profit and commercial success. Following Nicks' and Jolly's arguments however, it is important to look past the obvious and consider the role of the Navajo and other

⁶² Ibid, 315.

⁶³ Such as the Woodland Cultural Center in Ontario that created an exhibit titled "Fluff and Feathers: An Exhibition on the Symbols of Indianness" when confronted with questions about why the staff did not wear moccasins and headdresses. She also discusses Jim Skye, a leader of a dance troupe who both employs stereotypes and critiques them. 314.

Native people in the operation of the trading post today. Tourists leave after spending hours surrounded by potentially misleading visual narratives, their arms filled with objects and art supporting those narratives, left with a lasting impression of a people who appear to exist outside of contemporary time and space. Their experience might well parallel one of Fred Harvey's 1945 Indian Detours. Narratives such as the Hopi people's innovative secularization of traditional forms for tourist market appeal, the Navajo people's hybridization of Spanish silversmithing techniques to create jewelry that influenced and changed genre of tourist art, are all narratives that challenge the notion of a people stagnant and set outside of contemporary American culture. Cameron functions as many outsiders only, or at the very least most popular, view into Southwest Native cultures, and as one of the major recipients of tourist dollars on the Navajo reservation; its impact on both the practical economy and the theoretical space of the reservation cannot be ignored.

While this paper focuses on the Hopi kachina dolls, an equally illuminating avenue of investigation would be the Navajo sandpaintings that are also sold at Cameron. Similar to the kachina doll the sandpainting is a religious practice that has been secularized for public consumption, while retaining the mystery and intrigue of the original form. Examining elements of its development would add a further dimension of understanding to the socio-political context of Native life at Cameron. Additionally, looking at Cameron in relation to other Southwest trading posts could provide valuable insight into what has made this particular trading post so successful today. As a place where many cultures meet and mingle, there is a rich field of inquiry in the world of the trading post.

FIGURES



Cameron Trading Post Billboard on US HWY 64, Arizona. Image by author. September 2017.

Figure 1



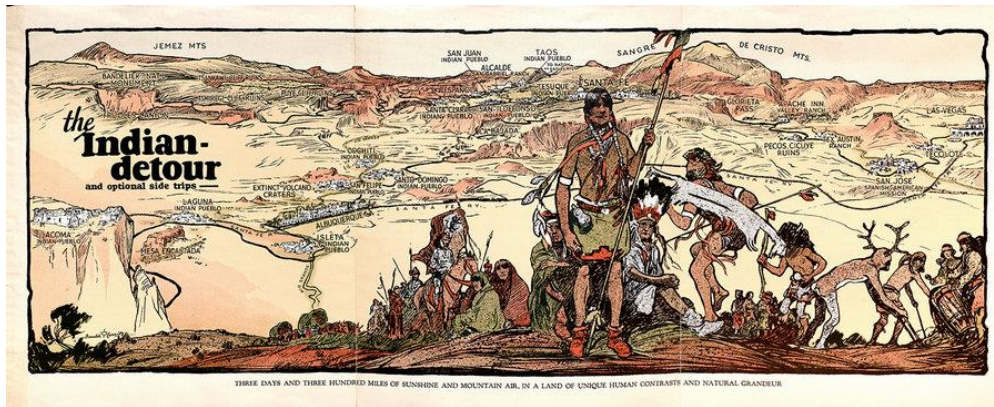
Kachina Dolls for Sale at Cameron Trading Post. Image by author. September 2017.

Figure 2



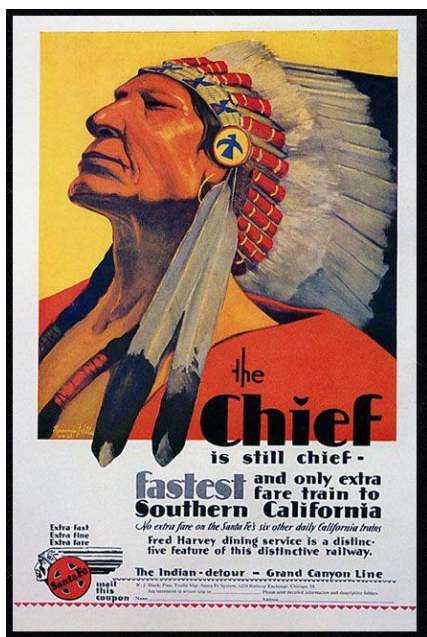
Headdress for Sale at Cameron Trading Post. Image by author. September 2017.

Figure 3



Fred Harvey Company
map
illustration.
1926.

Figure 4



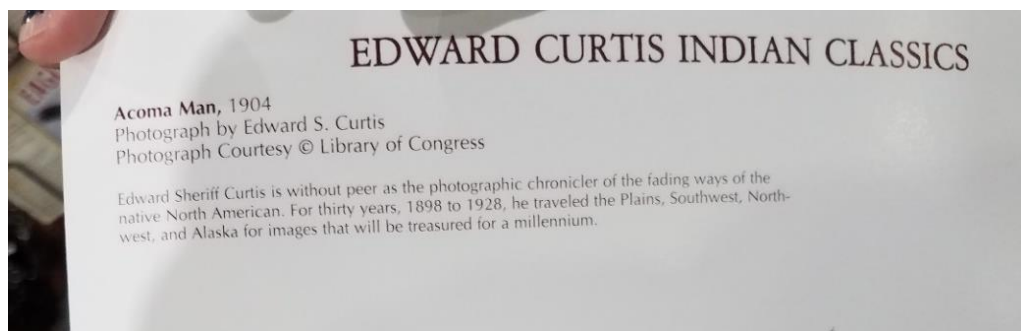
Santa Fe Railway travel
poster for Grand Canyon
Line. Circa 1925.

Figure 5



Postcard rack at Cameron. Image by author. July
2018.

Figure 6



Edward Curtis
 Indian Classics
 postcard
 (reverse).

Figure 7



Cameron Trading Post atrium. Image by author.
 September 2017.

Figure 8



Elsie Gander's loom at Cameron. Image by
 author. September 2017.

Figure 9



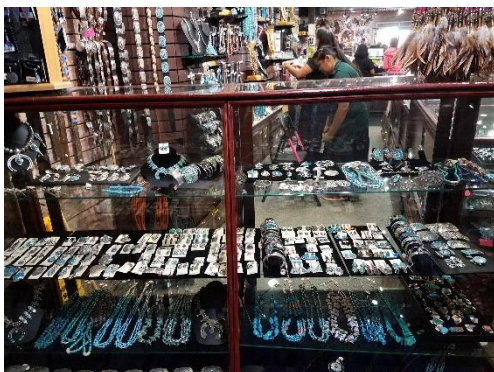
Rug weaving area at Cameron. Image by author. September 2017.

Figure 10



Rug weaving area at Cameron. Image by author. September 2017.

Figure 11



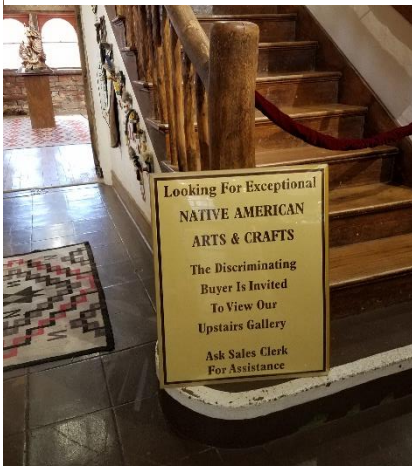
Jewelry for sale at Cameron. Image by author. September 2017.

Figure 12



Jewelry for sale at Cameron. Image by author. September 2017.

Figure 13



Fine Art Gallery sign at Cameron. Image by author. September 2017.

Figure 14



Kachina dolls for sale at Cameron. Image by author. September 2017.

Figure 15



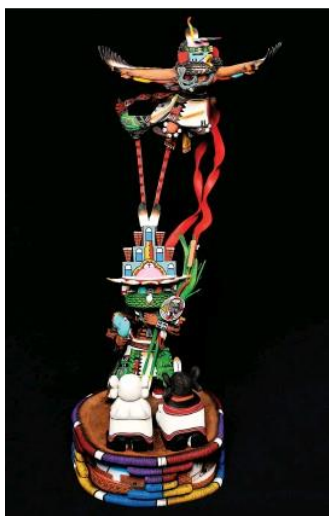
Adrian Nasafotie. *Hemis*. Cottonwood, acrylic. c. 2016. Image by Cameron Trading Post.

Figure 16



Adrian Nasafotie. *Hemis*. Cottonwood. c. 2016. (side view) Image by Cameron Trading Post.

Figure 17



Adrian Nasafotie. *Purification*. Cottonwood. 2016. Image by SWAIA.

Figure 18



Fine Art Gallery at Cameron. Image by author.
September 2017.

Figure 19

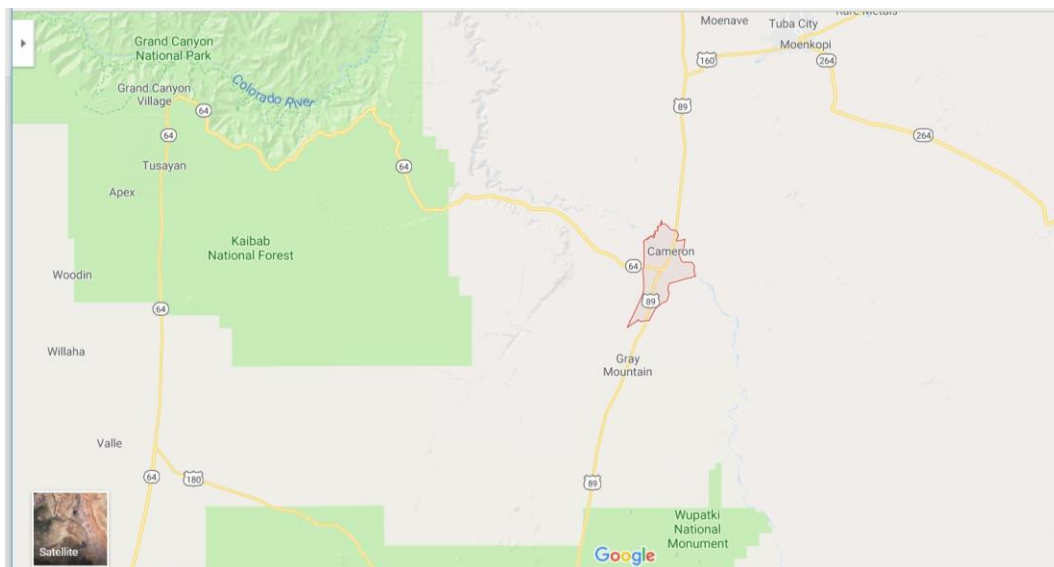


Signage at Cameron Trading Post.
Image by author. September
2017.

Figure 20

APPENDIX A

Map and Location of Cameron Trading Post



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